

REMARKS

Applicants request favorable reconsideration and allowance of the subject application in view of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 48-58 and 60-62 are presented for consideration. Claim 48 is the sole independent claim. Claims 48-51, 53, 55, 57, 58 and 60-62 have been amended to clarify features of the subject invention. Support for these changes can be found in the original application, as filed. Therefore, no new matter has been added.

Claims 48-54 and 60-62 were rejected 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,746,562 to Hasegawa et al. Claims 55-58 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Hasegawa et al. patent in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,319,322 to Ueda et al. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 48 relates to an exposure apparatus for exposing a wafer comprising a chamber.

Claim 48 has been amended to recite that the exposure apparatus is for exposing a wafer to an exposure light via a pattern of a reticle.

Claim 48 has also been amended to recite that the chamber is a chamber in which the exposure light passes.

Claim 48 has been further amended to recite a conditioner configured to circulate a gas through the chamber and to purge an atmosphere in the chamber with an inert gas.

Finally, claim 48 has been amended to recite a port through which the wafer is transferred between the chamber and another apparatus outside of the exposure apparatus, the port having a

load-lock mechanism including a pump configured to create a vacuum below atmospheric pressure in the port and a supply mechanism configured to supply the inert gas into the port.

In contrast, the patents to Hasegawa et al. and Ueda et al. are not understood to disclose or suggest a conditioner configured to circulate a gas through the chamber and to purge an atmosphere in the chamber with an inert gas, as recited by amended claim 48. In addition, these patents are not understood to disclose or suggest a port through which the wafer is transferred between the chamber and another apparatus outside of the exposure apparatus, the port having a load-lock mechanism including a pump configured to create a vacuum below atmospheric pressure in the port and a supply mechanism configured to supply the inert gas into the port, as also recited by amended claim 48.

Since these patents are not understood to disclose or suggest at least two features of amended claim 48, amended claim 48 is not anticipated by these patents. And since MPEP § 2142 requires the cited art to disclose or suggest all the claimed features to establish a prima facie case of obviousness, a prima facie case of obviousness cannot be established against amended claim 48 over these patents.

The Office Action cites col. 1, lines 20-33 and 60-67; col. 5, lines 52-65; and col. 7, lines 21 and 22 to show the purging of the atmosphere in a chamber with inert gas. But, even assuming arguendo that these portions of the Hasegawa et al. patent show this feature, these portions of the Hasegawa et al. patent are not understood to disclose or suggest a conditioner configured to circulate a gas through the chamber and to purge an atmosphere in the chamber with an inert gas, as recited by amended claim 48. The Office Action also cites Figure 3, and

col. 5, lines 52-61 to show a port section through which a wafer is transferred between a chamber and another apparatus and having a load-lock mechanism including a vacuum mechanism for creating a vacuum below atmospheric pressure inside the portion section and a supply mechanism for supplying the inert gas into the inside of the port section. But these portions of the Hasegawa et al. patent are not understood to disclose or suggest a port having a load-lock mechanism including a pump configured to create a vacuum below atmospheric pressure in the port and a supply mechanism configured to supply the inert gas into the port, as also recited by amended claim 48.

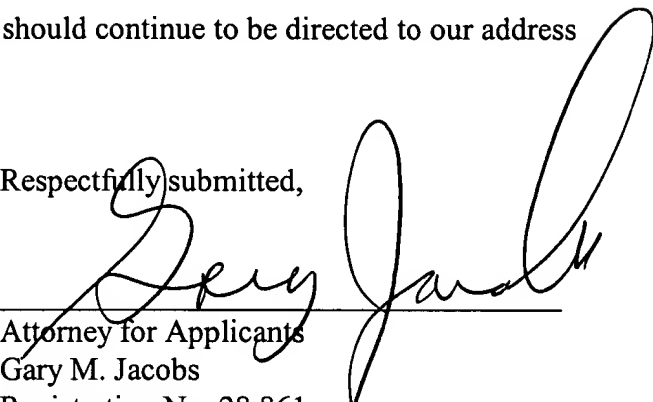
For these reasons, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claim 48 be withdrawn.

The dependent claims are also submitted to be patentable because they set forth additional aspects of the present invention and are dependent from independent claims discussed above. Therefore, separate and individual consideration of each dependent claim is respectfully requested.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, the application is now in allowable form. Therefore, early passage to issue is respectfully solicited.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010 All correspondence should continue to be directed to our address given below.

Respectfully submitted,



Attorney for Applicants
Gary M. Jacobs
Registration No. 28,861

FITZPATRICK, CELLA, HARPER & SCINTO
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, New York 10112-3801
Facsimile: (212) 218-2200
GMJ/eab

DC_MAIN 226427v1